Marcel Ray Duriez

Nevaeh

Book: 17

Midnight Sun

Interval Two-

Chapter: 116

Dumb love

Marcel's oldest brother is Daved.

Marcel tried not to think about how often, as a kid, those same legs had pumped him forward during a footrace and propelled her into trees when they had climbing wars. She had always been strong- as hard as polished timber, scrappy, and made of muscle. Stronger than most boys, and braver,

too. For Marcel’s whole life, she had been his best friend, his partner in crime.

(One year forward after high school.)

Liv- She was two years older than him and had been the de facto leader of whatever scheme or game they had invented. When he was five, they’d bottled their farts and tried to sell them. Olivia! Only in Pennsylvania would parents throw a dropping-out-of-college party for their daughter. Now, to be fair, the invitations didn’t

acknowledge the whole dropping-out bit. Nothing as crass as that. I mean, this is the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, after all. People have standards. At least when other people are watching. See, the twelve one-dollars-each invitations rolled the whole debacle as a ‘sending-off celebration for Olivia.’

Sending-off indeed. Not exactly. At least they got the location right, although even that’s a bit of a joke. It’s not exactly Rwanda or Haiti or

any of the places that Olivia originally intended to go to save the world.

But when your parents know someone who knows someone who knows everyone, you’re bound to get hooked up with someone who needs help a little closer to home. But the whole do-gooder motivation?

Total bullsh*t, I should know, it's been that way since the beginning of the end.

See, I’m Olivia IUP drop-out and soon-to-be resident of Middle- of-Nowhere. And let me tell you, my

reasons have nothing to do with charity. I am not that good. Not even close. I certainly don't deserve a freaking party for the things I have done. But I'm from Indiana. Parties are what we do. At this point, I'm just counting myself lucky. I talked to my mother asking to stay home and not get kicked out. I know why I can make it on my own, I see that now, yet I didn't when I was in high school that is for sure.

Money is hard to come by when you make two dollars an hour, working

your ass off, busing tables. Pa. -wages suck! Like the cops in my hometown all sh*tting through the same whole. Sucking each other off, in the backroom, doing nothing but buying new cars. That's all there good for covers some assholes ass, that takes their sh*t.

I wish I were kidding, about both here, yet I am not. So here I am, dressed in a brand- new cute mélange dress, trying to make everyone believe, I was bitten by the humanitarian bug just in time to bail on my first year of

college in music. I would be better, yet I left the band for Jenny also.

The most depressing thing is that everyone seems willing to just go with it as I did, things you do just to be cool make you lose yourself in the long run- does it not? Well done, Liv! So proud of you, Olivia! I said to myself when I got all F's Lovely inside and out, I feel now. You can spend all your time doing boys or at the beach when you have no life or money to pay for a living- A-Okay- life… money is everything that makes the world go

around. I wised up to this fast, in the first week of leaving home, when I was kicked out, begging to come back and suck on mom sh*t just to eat. Feel like corn?

My best friend, at least, doesn't seem to be buying it. 'Liv, you can't be serious. I mean, where are you going to get your hair highlighted and your designer clothes?' I am not… I said. A good wheel is where I have to shop now, and I wear what I have. Some part of me that deep wants to snap at my oldest friend to stop being so

superficial. But the other part of me- the more familiar one- is dying to grab her by the shoulders and give her an oh- my- flipping God-I- know!

Because, the truth is, I have spent way too much time wondering about how I'm going to keep my honey-blond hair just right now from returning to its natural mud color while in the God-awful hometown of mine. I have had the same hairdresser since our mothers decided it was time, we become versed in the difference between highlights and lowlights.

I was inseparable long before that.

Julyan Gorllie- She was the cute brunette to my classy blonde all through twelve years of private school.

Olivia taught me the art of rolling my plaid uniform skirt just enough to be interesting without being obvious, and in return, I was her explanation when she let Eliyn talk her out of her couture lavender dress on prom night at the college. Even when Julyan went off to Pittsburgh to meet up

with her girlfriend since she dropped out.

They hooked up and wanted it to go more like meeting mom and dad. Both made a pact to see each other at least a couple of times a month. So, far-like- it seems they have stuck to it.

Two months ago, this was, she's been telling me she will be my best friend no matter what (the no matter what, of course, is the not so minor fact that I won't be finishing my first year with a degree, someday soon, I have spent what seems like years

racing after.) Oh, deep down, we both know things have changed.

Phone calls just aren’t the same, I don’t have one now. I cannot afford one, I need gas for the car I can make payments for like I to have five dollars to spare when all but two go in the tank that I make.

Weekend nights are not the same as parties and flunk out or read in the dorm and pass what would you do in my shoes? College is an expansive way to party your butt off. I can say that much- do you want to pay the

eighty grand I owe. Dreaming at this point is the height of stupidity like smoking and doing drugs, I have to think about the clock inside me running too. I want to think about that one too a boy may be on the way, if this doesn't work out this time, the last girl broke my heart, and maybe a sex change is what I need in a lover.

~*~

'I'll be home for Thanksgiving,' I say by way of response to her email. I see in the school library a place I thought I would never- ever be, just like

being in horror over my hair crisis, in high school, it was a no-no! ‘I’ll make an appointment when I have some change to spare.’

~*~

My best friend purses her glossy lips and takes a sip of pink cava- a tiny one, since champagne has carbs, and Julyan lives in constant fear that her hourglass figure will turn lumpy before she can make it down the aisle in a size- 0 wedding dress. Where lovers yet we come to the point we feel we need boys in our lives too.

It’s a big step for a girl that was Bi. I not so anymore, I don’t know maybe I am getting too old for all this nonsocial sh*t, and love games. The fun was nice and it lasted, before I may have to look at it and get on with it. ‘So-three-plus months, we did think your mom would call in sick.’ She says, giving my hair a once-over. And kiss me goodbye, ‘Your ends might survive it if you don’t flatiron your hair, but the roots… ugh- love yeah- see you around.’ It was a flirty fling- if you want to call it that, we all have in college, I did.

‘Maybe- I could just wear a bag over my head instead of, like my dart pillow- and wishing I was dead, all freaked up, and sped- in the head- days like this I wish I was ahead, with the story’s all read.

Like the preps the jocks, hitting them all that step on my block, I know what I got a hanging sock filled with rocks, I am about to hit anyone that steps on my block, I hate on the preps’ and the jocks, with their nice polo shirts and matching socks, throwing at me like a rock on glass, as they pass.

Just another sauced- like her, oh- I am sorry- I didn't want it this way, but what you are it if it will never change, I will just be another left behind, life is unkind, I did want it this way, and yet what good is it always, I will be left behind.' This is here to show you all that I did it! Plus, I am not stopping! Living life on rewind… what do you say about that? I am the only one that would get that, do you? Just like all of you I know that you have too. You can't define it, this life that you live. All the anger let it out, LET IT OUT!'

Chapter: 117

Tonic

I say, taking a sip of my champagne. A bigger ship than she, because unlike my curvy friend, I’m more of the willowy (read: flat chested) type, and if my parents’ genetics are any indication, my beanpole figure will probably outlast my teeth.

Being able to legally drink at my parents’ frequent social gatherings is pretty much the only good thing about getting older. I suspect that’s one of the reasons the drinking age is

twenty-one. It's as though some wise person way back when knew that alcohol would start to get helpful at that point in your life.

I'm nearly twenty-two, and God knows I've found a drink handy a time or two. Especially in the last year.

I catch a whiff of candy-scented perfume a second before an arm goes around my waist.

'You'll never guess who dared to show his face,' my friend Andrea murmurs in my ear. 'And he brought her.' She and he are giving me that

wary, wide-eyed look that everyone gets when Ethan Price and I are in the same room, and before I know it, I'm flanked by four of my other friends, all nearly identical in jewel-colored cocktail dresses and designer high heels. I don't have to turn around to know that the girl- Maddie is so concerned about won't be matchy-matchy with anyone. Ethan's new girlfriend has a distinct style that the socially polite set refers to as unique and the total snobs among us would call weird. In my circle, there's nothing worse than weird.

‘Marcel and Karly are perfectly wired together, and that is perfectly right for them, or so they both say.’

Olivia and her new love: ‘You want to talk about it?’ she asks, not looking up. ‘I wouldn’t even know where to start.’ ‘She does tend to have that effect on people. They come in expecting to feel kindly but walk away wanting to strangle her.’ ‘That about sums it up,’ I say, tracing a finger through the flour dusting the counter. ‘But you’re saying this to me?’ She asks.

That I may want a boy now, and that we need to see others, it's not you- it's me. I press my lips together as I consider the thoughts of letting go and finding new love. Like the thought of the taste and feel of her lips pressed to mine, it felt so right to me. I don't want to stay that don't want me in their life anymore, she said with disappointment. Yet there was some regret in her eyes and voice, I felt that I knew her so well, yet I didn't at all really, you know what kind of love you have where you want more yet no less. I want to scream at the top of my lungs

and hightail may cute ass it back to her apartment as soon as I got home here now, where people buy bread and don't give a sh*t if you want to be alive or died, and where it's not so freaking quiet, or nose with the fart can cars that go by, and where ware the girl don't have sexy auburn eyes and sh*tty attitudes. Sometimes like her PMS-ing or over crap.

But then I picture her smug condescension as he stared down at me from that ravaged, once-gorgeous face. I knew I would feel this way. Heck,

Julyan made sure that there’s nothing to hold me here, other than her love for me and mine for her. More lust than love, if you want to get- down to it.

It’s as though she saw right through my plan to swoop in here like a saintly guardian angel to absolve my sins, and she’s telling me he is not going to play with my emotions and brain or life. Getting forgiveness is not going to be as simple as ladling soup into a weary, appreciative soul’s gateway.

Maddie gives another of those half-smiles that she seems to have in endless supply. It's a smile that says, Life sucks, but it's always worth living. 'Most people don't admit how frustrating he is,' she is. 'Most of them pretend he's an absolute dear and claims they're the ones who can fix them. Although sometimes they don't bother to pretend, they just do. They just leave within minutes of meeting them.'

'Can't say I blame her or her,' I say, pushing away from the counter.

Looking around and back behind me. ‘But it just so happens I have nowhere else to be.

-And-

I’m also probably not the right person to help him, but then I don’t know if there is such a thing when you’re dealing with him.’

‘Can we forget about the things I said when I was drunk! Sleeping with my close on- and you're gone! I am my own worst enemy, kicking my sh*t out of me.’ looking out the window last night- ‘Well then.’ Maddie gives the

dough a satisfied pat before wiping her hands on a dishtowel, I begged her to love me again for a place to live also, yet don't tell her that. 'I'll show you to your room.' The upstairs of the house- the apartment is as vast and grand as the downstairs, but its emptiness is a little frightening, she has like nothing in here. I follow Madilyn down a long series of hardwood hallways, noting that we pass a half dozen bedrooms- that is not used, not one of which seems to be in use for anything really, they need work I can see.

Of course, they wouldn't be: her father doesn't live here yet he pays for her to be and own the building, and I'm assuming her like my mom and her mom for life in this crud hole, in the nearby ghetto part of the town, wherever this is- it what I call it.

Which means it is the worst of the worst being alone. Alone- is not something you want to be walking around this place? You get some you don't want or mugged. The thought should be terrifying, and it is. But then I remember my reaction to her and also

her… and those girls too that are gone. That pure, undiluted surge of desirability, and now, I am frantic on top of being nervous as hell. Thinking about all this sh*t.

‘Here we go,’ Maddie says, stopping at a room on the left at the end of the hall. ‘It’s not the biggest of the guest rooms, but the view’s the best in the house.

Other than the master suite, of course.’ At this point it's just kind of bed buddy’s, some there to hold on to yet it’s not the same for me, nor her or

so I feel. I think we grow up some, maybe not soft enough to hold on to in the night- so- yeah- I will go with that.

‘Is the master suite where Maddie’s father sleeps when he comes off to the home he lives in now after he left her mom also?’ I ask, stepping into the room.

Everyone seems to back up after all the deaths, at clit- high joint schools. The joint meaning joined with the old oak view one next door.

Chapter: 118

Apartments

Here daddy rarely stays the night, yet I like him a lot. I could see myself with a man like that.' She says quietly, and I overhear. Cute yet creepy all at the same time. 'When he does, he is in the guest room, I may pop in just to see him, in a see-through night top, and see that man, It's the only way they can keep the peace in my heart of what it could be like.' 'How wonderfully dysfunctional I would have it be with someone like that.' I mutter in my mind

feeling the thoughts of wetness in my brain making me hot.

But as I take in my new bedroom, I temporarily forget all about Langdon's issues, because the room looks like something out of a luxury resort.

The bed is huge, its bedding a pristine white save for the fur blanket draped across the foot of the bed. The furniture is all-natural wood and has that sort of oversized one-of-a-kind quality look that makes me think it was made locally instead of created in bulk

and distributed to thousands of households.

There’s a large desk in one corner, a reading chair in another, but the star of the room is the massive windows overlooking the water. ‘Wow,’ I whisper. ‘See, we do have a few things Pittsburgh doesn’t,’ Maddie says, not bothering to hide the pride in her voice. ‘Frenchman Bay is one of them.’ I can’t argue. I’ve seen plenty of gorgeous views on summer vacations and spring break trips, but this ranks up there with the best of them because

it’s unanticipated. It’s nearly dark now, but it only adds to the appeal of the shadowy water.

The ‘Bathroom’s through there,’ she says, gesturing to the door opposite the window. ‘I put in fresh towels, and there’s a small fridge next to the closet with water and a few snacks. I cook three meals a day. Not anything at all fancy, so if you need anything in between, or anything else, you’re on your own.’ I like how she imagined in the bright sunlight it would be postcard-worthy.

‘Resonances are great,’ I say, giving her a small smile. ‘Although I’m not hungry when I travel back and forth, I said glad to see, and be home and love you again, she knew it was a line, and a waste of time, so I’m good for tonight on the sofa maybe I crawl in with you like the old times back in the days of high school.’ I got in naked and she was in a nightgown, it came off and we did the old stuff, it was fun, some of the magic back. We fall asleep looking out at all the lights. Her side hug cuddling me like them. The sun rays were the alarm…

Chapter: 119

Days

Photo of me going down on my 7" long toy, laying on my belly legs kicking.

≈ Past remembers of Karly ≈

Days-

I haven’t eaten since breakfast, but may need to eat has, without doubt, deserted me for the jiffies of moments. It probably has something to do with the fact that I have somehow gotten myself into the mother of all disasters.

‘For meals, do the caretakers usually eat with her?’ I ask…? Her- I want to press my lips together- yet hers with mine just for a moment or longer.

Like thin never wanting to stop.

‘No. He takes almost all of his meals in the study, some in his bedroom. You are of course welcome to eat with Mick and me at any time, although we tend to eat in the small house.’

I like to rock into my man thing-ie replica with the two lumps at

the bottom, that I use to get there, sometimes behind me sucking cupped to the wall, as she is coming tough me or him, I rock ever so easy back and forth into it, sapping my hip down on it. (Awww Ahhh! Saying in a sexy sigh…)

She says it in that way people have of not expecting you to take them up on the offer, and I admit

I’m a little depressed by the fact that I’m expected to eat by myself. My family has always made a big deal about sharing meals, so the thought of

four people living in one home and eating separately seems strange.

Then again, eating alone seems a lot less strange than sharing a meal with Paul. As if he'd even allow it, especially after the way I behaved.

Although, oddly, I still don't regret my over-the-top rudeness. It was worth it for the sheer surprise on his face. And something tells me that surprise is the only thing I'll have going for me if I want to have any chance of keeping the upper hand.

Lindy heads toward the door.

‘There’s a phone in the kitchen and at the end of the hall, and both have a number listed for the small house. I usually head over there shortly after I get Paul his dinner, so if you need anything-’

‘I’ll be fine.’

But the file didn’t answer any of the things I wanted to know. Like whether she enjoyed that kiss yesterday or was just pretending. Whether she likes guys to hold her face or her hips when they kiss her.

Whether she has a boyfriend.

And, most important - what the freak is she doing in Maine?

-And-

‘Don’t go running alone here,’ I say. I don’t bother to explain all the dangers of a woman running alone in the dark. Bar

Harbor is safe enough, but all it takes is one sick freak lurking in the bushes to destroy a life.

Chapter: 120

Fooling around

At lunch- a boy asked what does- she uses and likes, so I know.

Why?

‘I want to date her… is that okay?’

Maybe! You have to pass my test.

Maddie- like all the girls in my group wall a have three, like most girls in the world I feel, I also have the suction cup 7 inches, a rabbit my is blue, and a hot pink seven vibrating functions hard plastic vibrators slash

dildo. You asked I have no shame in saying. I have my handbag built-in now, ‘really’ do you want to see- he said nothing- without even a thought she turns it on, and it bounces on the table and round the food trays. Do have it hop into someone’s milk, he said.

Maddie is quite a must of the time yet can be silly when you want her to be. She said to the girls- I have Some time- I use a flat looking-glass under me on my bed and rode it bouncing up and down on the bead meatus, letting the bed do the work, hehe, leaning

back downing the cowgirl, or forward for old-school freaking feeling all missionary and- aw-ah oh- yeah. Karly, she likes it sideways; I don't get it?

Do you?

Karly- Madalyn all summed up she likes, fingering herself- cooking anything and everything. Singing is not always hitting the notes, yet sweetly, running, biking, swimming, outdoors hunting, I don't get that one. Jewelry making all kinds of cool things, look at all these we have, and she has on. Take one to tell her to see if she notices.

Pole dancing working out like Zumba sh*t. Even Knitting-Knitting…??? Gardening at her apartment on her veranda porch. Photography like of her taking pics of her more fallow and of the country land when she is there in the small towns, or school trips like D.C,

Teenage, New York, flora, and Canada. Collect Things like old radio’s, and records, and typewriters, on is white and platinum, with her name on it, in cloud blue. Which is worth

something! Her dad loved the sh*t out of her for that one.

Suck up!

God, I need to read that one again. Yoga- yah, the only time I get into those positions is when- yah you get it.

Why not do it for fun she said? I want to get some out of me for it if I am going to bend it around like that- God! She has funny moments, of randomness too, blurting out sh*t as I do. Too much time with gaming and dumb gaming at the school always on

the brown team. Dressing up in dumb sh*t like a lumberjack and once a cow, she was dry humping on me the apple in the hallway.

Pooping three times a day god- I don’t sh*t in a week! ‘Getting it!’ Piss! Fingers! More about that pace of she over there huh- okay, she loves ballroom dancing, and asking all fairy and sh*t. Oh, piss! More…?

Sure, a boy wants to know… noses boy. Do it yourself… ask- her yourself baby- d*ick! I was thinking. Blogging whatever I ask why the freak

does she want to PMS- b*tch online for anyway? I don't get…?

Where friends that don't get one another? Belly-Dancing, god- yah no- like- do that on your red flow! Antiques- did I say that? Um- lap Dancing- 'I see it!' I see that your one of those dumb boys ant' yah? Gulp- sure! He said nervously! I love making dumb boys feel awkward!!! Flower arranging… oh, Aromatherapy- 'Yeah got ah-w!' 'Boy said yeah I see we have a lot in common, hook me up!' Wink- I'll see what I can do! A Boy- I don't even

know his name- ‘Okay,’ she says, surprising me. I narrow my eyes and wait for it, and he squirms. ‘Why are you looking at me like that?’

‘I’ve never known a female to acquiesce that easily without a catch. How about you hit me with it now and get it over with.’ I shrug’. ‘Fine. I was going to say that I won’t freak you over if you promise to go with her, but you freak up I’ll cut your balls off- got it.’ ‘GOD! He said.’ Snip- snip- I made that finger moment.

I think he is okay- he does not get any I can see that all over his face and down there too- so as soon as he smells some puss- puss- he'll be all over her- in loving lust. I love looking down at boys! You have to see if it's good enough for your girlfriend if you would do it, by looking at it is saying hello; she should not have to either. You gotta feel it too so- yeah. Girls get it.

Feel that hard thing-ie, moving on! I need a cold shower- God! :0 < clown!

What a goofball slash clown! It’s kind of cute, I have to say, oh boys- right…???

Dumb!!!

Chapter: 121

Squeal

Maddie- ‘No,’ I say, almost before she’s finished her sentence. ‘Why not?’ He is your type, okay for you. I rap my cane once against the ground. ‘Well, for starters, even though there are tortoises that could surpass your sorry excuse for a jog, I’m in no

shape to accompany even the most pathetic of runners.' 'What a handy skill you have of overloading a sentence with insults,' she says as she reaches up to adjust her ponytail. 'That must be helpful, what with your thriving social life and all.' I thump my cane against the ground again, studying her. 'Must be nice, picking on the cripple.' Maddie rolls her eyes like I have to do what with and to this boy. 'Please. Your soul's more crippled than your leg.'

She has no idea how right she is, and I have no intention of letting her

anywhere close enough to find out. I've gotten good at shutting people out by pushing them away… being as nasty as possible until they reach their breaking point. But with her? It's different. And not only because the three-month rule she has will be more than her father's implemented means I can't scare her away. I, of all people might realize that the caustic, hostile routine isn't a routine at all. This girl might just figure out what I'm truthfully rotten to the core.

It’s better than she does; I just need to delay that realization for a while.

Three months, specifically. I’m not saying I’m going to be nice to her. I have no intention of going all friendly on her ass. But I’ll do whatever it takes to prevent her from realizing that I’m deader inside than she can know. I’ll do whatever it takes to ensure that little Kelly gets the treatment she needs, the same can be said for all my girls, I look out for. I will not, however, accompany

her on her morning ‘runs,’ and I use that word loosely.

The boy will, he freaked up he gets it, honey nut cheerios she will be having I am sure of that, he- he- he! I love it, it's time she gets it in, god, like a real on even, I like the real deal! Being me! Get it in like, your only young ounces, find a boy, girls like me find a boy with the one you like! ‘There’s a treadmill in the gym,’ I say, continuing along the path. We can do it in that room at the school! ‘Is there? Colettolyn said.’ she asks, falling into

step beside me. ‘Rumor has it you don’t use it there with you pass meetups.’ ‘You know, this…?’ I say as though realization just struck, in the thought of that girl. Karly said you did. ‘I just had the best idea.

How about we do not do this chatty little shared morning together? You go ahead and scamper back up to the house with your flip-floppy fitting shoes, and I’ll continue slithering along this path alone.

Yeah?’

His- joke- ‘A teacher is teaching a class, and she sees that Johnny isn't paying attention, so she asks him, ‘If three ducks are sitting on a fence, and you shoot one, how many are left?’ Johnny says, ‘None.’ The teacher asks, ‘Why?’

Johnny says, ‘Because the shot scared them all off.’

The teacher says, ‘No, two, but I like how you're thinking.’ Johnny asks the teacher, ‘If you see three women walking out of an ice cream parlor, one is licking her ice cream, one is sucking

her ice cream, and one is biting her ice cream, which one is married?' The teacher says, 'The one sucking her ice cream.' Johnny says, 'No, the one with the wedding ring, but I like how you're thinking!'

Her- Joke back- 'The teacher asked me, 'Why is your cat at school today?' I replied crying, 'Because I heard my girlfriend tell my mommy, 'I am going to eat your p*ssy so that is why she is at the school today!'

Nice!

I snorted, he was so funny, I didn't want to… 'Please. Where'd we talk more, online?' She's silent for a second. 'They got great chatting it up.' 'I'm sure they did. Probably by people who liked the pretty pink color.' 'What's wrong with the color?' 'For lipstick? Nothing,' I say, even though I have no idea why I'm continuing this conversation. The innocuousness of it feels suspiciously standard.

'Let me guess,' she says. 'Your high school track team placed second in the state like a hundred years ago,

and you’re still reliving the glory?’ I feel the love coming hard from inside me!

Chapter: 122

It sounds dirty

One day later- Karly- oh…? God…? hose um- down… God, you two- just freak in the lunchroom tables why don’t ya! And then do something like that- yet can picture it, I am done. YAH! JUST GRAB her ASS- a boy-girl down the way said, as they were doing as they do on the Discovery channel! ‘A

hundred years ago? Exactly how old do you think I am?

And no, I didn't run track in high school.' A thin line of my black lashes lined in and out eyes at her. 'Is that a crack about the thrash?'

'Oh yeah, can we talk about that for a second, me and liv, I see I do not need anymore?' she asks, peering down at the object in question. 'That whole snake thing is a reference to your penis, right?' Karly said you want me to kiss you, baby, it will make you feel better. Sure! She said.

We are so freaked up! Is Love-love, right?

Get’n it- form anyone or at any time… that how it is these days, girl breaks up one night after sex and do it with your friend the night. That’s HIGH SCHOOL for a popular preppie type, like me now. I starting to look more and more like the girl on the cam I said to Liv- ‘Awh- that is okay, we all know, anyway.’

Oh- that is NICE! I am not scared to lick or take anything on my girl down there and down more than

that in the backside, neither is she if they love your finger and suck it all and in-between too. I kiss every inch, every inch as she does for me.

My footsteps falter than ever before or so it felt to me. This girl looks like a poster child for a church's youth group, opposite Maddie, and the penis is so not a word I was prepared for. She loves the lord yet not a d*ick. Not in this context, anyway. 'Seriously?' I ask, annoyed at being thrown off guard. Not only does she invade my personal space and invite herself on a walk she

undoubtedly wasn’t invited on, but she’s prying into my past, accusing me of being an old man with that and those don’t work for her or me sometimes, and now dropping penis into conversation like we’re discussing the weather.

Olivia shrugs but doesn’t make any move to head in the opposite direction. ‘I think you should have gotten a jaguar cane. That would have been cool.’ ‘I’m just saying this,’ she says with a shrug. ‘It’s a serpent head, and the way you use it keeps it sort of

in the vicinity of, well… your snakehead. I figure that can't be a coincidence.' Sweet baby Jesus. 'It's a cane.

I can't use it and not have it in the vicinity of bull sh*t. Just never mind.

Can you please just trot along back to the house? Your Barbie shoes are going to get dirty out here.' I puckered my brow. For a second, I almost tell her that I don't need any help upping the sexy hot factor. Then I

remember that I’m not well, not anymore.

I’m the crippled, small-town version. Looking at photos doesn’t even remind me of that day of days and places of places.

I take a long breath of cold morning air to keep myself from letting the despair that’s lodged in my throat come rushing out in an angry bellow. If I let her see even a graying of what’s inside me, she’ll be on her way back to my school days. In addition to alluring as that is, I need her here. At least until

I formulate a plan for what the hell to do with my life, now I asked the question, with anger and fear and desperation.

In anticipation of that, I have to keep her around in a way that doesn't make me want to strangle her or push her against a nearby tree and kiss her nonsensically. Or better yet, none at all. 'How long have you been running?' I ask, almost choking on the inane, unimportant question. It's been so long since I've had a casual conversation

that it feels both unnatural and strangely familiar.

Plus, it keeps my mind off the way she fills out her pink running shirt. Practicality tells me she's got a sports bra under there- probably pink- but it doesn't stop me from fantasizing about seeing

Olivia is less utilitarian undergarments. 'The running thing's kind of new,' she replies, jerking, lurching, and shuddering me back to the dialogue exchange.

‘Tolerant yet as soon as I think I am out they suck me back into them!’

‘Shocker,’ I mutter out to them in a grumble.

‘Well, sorry I’m not you.’

I smile a little at her. ‘That’s the only sprinter you know, isn’t it?’

‘Maybe. Jeez. What is it with you and running? I didn’t realize that track trivia would be part of the job's necessities,’ she says, her tone maddened, as we take a sharp right

turn in the path, bringing us closer to the water.

‘I miss it.’ My answer is simple and a good deal more revealing than I intended.

I half expected her to mock me. To inform me that there are more important things in life than the ability to run, or to pacify me by telling me that there are other things I can do that are just as great.

Chapter: 123

Everlasting

Nods and gulp’s Instead, she nods, and I whip my chin off the spit, but not in a pitying way, just a quick acknowledgment of my statement. ‘I started running as an escape,’ she says after several seconds of silence. I glance down at her profile, noting that her nose is just slightly upturned and kind of cute. ‘An outflow from what?’ She glances back at me, and our eyes collide for one charged moment. The message is clear: she’ll tell me her secrets when I tell her mine.

Which will never- ever… never-ever - ever happen.

‘Your inhalation all wide of the mark,’ I say, tearing my eyes away from hers.

‘My breathing is fine, I feel you 're fine, I am fine where all find to move on.’ ‘Not if you want to run more than three miles. Your breaths are too shallow with a swallow. You need to inhale deeper. Engage your diaphragm. And get used to matching the breaths to your steps. For your slow pace, inhale for maybe three or four steps,

then exhale for the same.' 'That seems like a lot of thinking for something that's supposed to be natural.' 'You'll get used to it if you suck it in harder.' 'Okay, what else?' she says, spreading her arms wide, think of your legs when you're with your girlfriend. 'Am I bowlegged? My ponytail not high enough?'

'Just start with the breathing for now,' I say, irritation running in and out starting to set in as I realize how much I want to be the one running, not

the one telling somebody else how to run.

‘Sure thing, Coach,’ she murmurs.

‘So-o, by any chance, does your sudden sympathy for running mean you want to be all by yourself?’ She mopes making a sad face, with a pouting lip, and so on. ‘Not really. Why?’ ‘Jesus, take a hint and do what is implied-already.’

‘Ah. You want me to leave you to ruminate.’

‘Yup-per.’

She stops walking immediately and pivots so she’s facing back toward the house. ‘Fine. I’ll try to master your little breathing activity on the way back. Same time tomorrow?’

‘Nope, find another time to run and on my time if you don’t get it.’
‘I’m getting paid, either way, do what you like it's wrong to do it your way, I’ll keep you company, you know over here looking down on you shaking my head when you F- it up.’

‘Well, do so in silence, and from far afield.’

She sighs as though I’m a peevish child. ‘It’s shocking that none of your other companions stuck around for more than a twosome of weeks.

Shocking, I say.’ ‘See you later,’ I say all with F- you in my mind, not at all happy with the outcome of everything, nodding with my cane back toward the house. ‘See ya, I said to my girls,’ she says as she begins walking backward so that she's still finished-facing me. ‘Also, fun little trivia for this

morning? In the argument for your uncalled- for breathing advice?’ ‘No thanks, do I want more of this sh*t.’

Chapter: 124

Open mouth

She ignores me and points to the cane. ‘That cane? All for the show. You haven’t used it once to support your weight this entire time.’

I open my mouth to argue, but instead, my jaw goes a little slack as it hits me.

She’s right…

…And I haven’t once thought about my leg or my scars.

She’s already jogging away from me, and I stand still for several minutes, watching her until she disappears around a bend in the path. Then I continue with my walk, telling myself I’m relieved to have my solitude back. And if there’s the slightest undercurrent of loneliness, I ignore it.

Olivia- After my shower, I go looking for Paul.

He’s not in his library or the kitchen. Halfway back up the stairs, I

hear the hard, driving music from the direction of his bedroom. I didn't grow up with a brother

(or a sister, for that matter,)

but I'm pretty sure all that scary guitar noise is dude code for-

'keep the hell out.'

Fine with me…

I'm not sure which encounter feels stranger: the kiss in the library last night, or the unexpected predawn walk/run, where we almost connected

for like a half-second before he reverted to butt-hole mode.

Returning to my bedroom, I check my email, ignoring everything except the message from Harry Langdon. I hit reply and proceeded to vomit out a bunch of lies about how ‘Paul and I are going to do just fine together!’

It’s not like I can tell him the truth: that I’m not at all sure how to survive three months with his gorgeous, tormented son.

And then, because I have no idea what else I’m supposed to be doing, I take myself on a little tour of the Langdon estates.

The compound is just as enormous and impressive in the morning as it was at twilight, and although everything is state-of-the-art, right down to the sound system in the small house, which Mick insists on showing me, I can’t help but feel like I’ve stepped back into another era where some desolate duke reigns over a semi-abandoned estate.

The gym, in particular, is depressing. It has enough equipment for an entire football team, which is a little pathetic considering only one person is using it, and according to Harry Langdon's earlier emails, Paul only works his upper body- not the leg that so desperately needs rehabilitation.

Yet- I wasn't lying this morning when I pointed out that he doesn't seem to need his cane. Admittedly, my psychology expertise is limited to one throwaway psych class during my

freshman year at NYU, but I'd bet serious money that Paul Langdon's issues are a lot more in his head than in his leg.

And I suspect that, deep down, he knows it too.

Which is why he's avoiding me.

He's not trying to run me off with the same sort of hostile enthusiasm he displayed yesterday, but he's certainly not seeking me out. I'm disappointed but not surprised. After all, he's made it very clear that he can't stand anything about me. Not my

personality, not my running technique, not my pink shoes- Later, Lindy asks me to take Paul lunch- homemade minestrone and a ham sandwich- but when I bring it into the study, the room is still empty. However, there's a glass of some brown alcohol on the desk that I know wasn't there earlier, so he's not locked in his bedroom anymore.

Yup. Avoiding me. I take the tumbler of liquor out with me after setting the tray on the desk. I'm not a teetotaler by any means, but the last

thing this guy needs is to be drinking before noon.

When I get back to the kitchen, I dump the alcohol down the sink, perversely hoping that I've just tossed something extremely expensive.

I spend the next couple of hours in my room. I call my mom and give her a glossy, half-truth-filled version of my first day. Next- I call Bella, and although I fill her in on the fact that Paul is younger than expected and ridiculously sexy (best friend privilege; I can't tell her,) I stop short

of confiding that I’m both drawn to him and utterly terrified by him. I certainly don’t tell her about the kiss.

But something else has been bothering me since last night.

In those first moments, after I pulled back, deliberately degrading her, she was shocked and angry, as she was supposed to be. But in the moments that followed, there was something else that pissed me off: resignation. In a matter of seconds, the angry, betrayed light went out of her eyes, and she just stood there,

accepting what I'd just done as though it were her due.

I may not know Olivia Middleton well- okay; I don't know her at all, but I do know that she deserves more than what she got from me last night.

There's a soft knock at the door, and I hate that my head shoots up in the expectation and my heart seems to beat just a little bit faster.

Then I remember: Olivia doesn't knock. It's Lindy.

‘You look tired,’ Lindy murmurs as she sets the tray with my lunch on my desk.

‘Yeah.’ I dig the heels of my hands into my eyes. ‘Rough Night.’

She nods.

‘Same with Olivia. She was up early, but I sent her right back to bed. The girl looked like she hadn’t slept a wink.’

I catch myself before I can beg for more detail. Did she tell Lindy what happened? I scan the housekeeper’s

familiar features carefully, looking for any clue, but Lindy's calm and expressionless, as always. I like that about her. She's one of the few people who've figured out how to be there for me without acting like a goddamned battering ram. Are you listening, Dad? And all your doctor and shrinks with your bullsh*t about how PTSD can be cured?

But just for the briefest second, I wish she'd ask. I wish someone would ask what happened. How I am.

Something other than the vapid Need anything?

Hell yes, I need something. I need someone to care for.